GOD WITH REVOLVER

RENE RICARD

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INTRODUCTION

Rene once told me about his visit to the Andy Warhol survey at the Institute for Contemporary Art in Boston in 1966: "I sat in front of a large flower painting and planned out my entire life." He was nineteen.

I always felt close to Rene because we both grew up in and around Boston, a rather provincial city in those days, with a small but important counter-culture. The two dozen colleges there provided a steady supply of young blood, which Rene always took good advantage of, crashing in the Harvard dorms with occasional boyfriends. Boston and Cambridge are separated by the Charles River, which you could cross on the MBTA train, or walk the three miles if you wished to save the quarter. They were very different places so it was a good arrangement: if you got bored with one scene you could jump over to the other. The fifteen-year-old Rene hooked up with his first mentor, Prescott Townsend (1894–1973), founder of Boston's modern gay rights movement. Soon he met John Wieners, Steve Jonas, and Ed Hood (with whom he appears in Warhol's *Chelsea Girls*, 1966). Gloucester and Provincetown were the outposts. It was a world.

After seeing the Warhol show at the ICA and making a few connections in Andy's scene, Rene moved to New York and began his apprenticeship at the Factory and Max's Kansas City, where he laid the social and aesthetic groundwork for his early poems. His milieu was always the art world. He disliked poets and the poetry scene—not enough glamor or money. His poems of the late '60s and early '70s are collected in his first book, *1979-1980,* published by the Dia Art Foundation and edited by Gerard Malanga. There were subsequent books being prepared in the Dia poetry series, including John Wieners and Angus MacLise, but Rene's demands were so costly and onerous these volumes were abandoned, and his ended up the only book in the series.

The 1980s were a fortunate time for Rene. Painting, his great love, came roaring back, and he could claim his rightful position as critic-flâneur. The merging of art and capital that Warhol foretold had begun. It was a lucrative period, and Rene was not shy about claiming his share of the spoils. Champagne flowed in the expensive restaurants of New York, and Rene dined out nightly on his wit and influence (his models were Whistler and Wilde). Behind the bravura he was also careless, undisciplined, and lacking in self-esteem. For one who was not built with brakes, this period was destined to end badly.

By the end of the 1980s he was in dreadful shape. After burning down his apartment he was sleeping on the subway, unwashed, malnourished, with skin conditions. He was sometimes psychotic, talking to people who weren't there. He was also smoking crack, and having unsafe sex with Times Square hustlers. That he survived this period is a miracle. It was during that time we assembled this book. I was never entirely satisfied with it, but I felt something had to be done, as I was afraid it would be his last. In those days Rene would drop in on friends, collapse for a few hours, borrow money, and be off again. But he often would leave behind poems, scribbled in a book, on the wall, or on some painter's canvas. *God with Revolver* was compiled from these scraps, which I gathered up in his wake, thanks to Richard Hambleton, William Rand, Robert Hawkins, Francesco Clemente, Brice and Helen Marden, and others. I was always frustrated there wasn't more, but I took what I could get.

Francesco Clemente and I met a few times a year to discuss possible titles in the Hanuman Books series we published in Madras between 1985 and 1995. Always at the top of our list, Rene agreed to be part of the series only if his were a full-sized book, something that violated the whole premise of the project, based as it was on the miniature format. This sort of contrariness was typical of

Rene, but he had a good point: he did not want to see his carefully crafted lines broken after every fourth word. And his lines *were* carefully crafted. He was an expert in metrics and verse forms, and although he doesn't adhere to any formal models, they always underlie his work.

The final edit of this book (revisions, deletions, sequencing) took place over one long, harrowing day at my apartment in the West Village. Rene dropped by unexpectedly and I brought out the folder of poems I'd been collecting. The timing was auspicious because we were sending off the next group of titles to India in a few days. Rene was quite high and was accompanied by a street tough, a hustler he'd picked up on 42nd Street. The two of them smoked crack from a small glass pipe, the acrid acetone fumes filling the apartment. Then they would disappear into the bathroom to have sex.

As if this weren't enough, at one point Gregory Corso stopped by with his friend and translator George Scrivani, who traveled to India every year to see the books through the production process. Normally Rene would not have tolerated another poet, but he and Gregory admired each other's work. This was important to Rene, because with the exception of Robert Creeley and John Wieners, he felt his work was not accepted by the previous

generation, and mostly it was not. His confrontational and abrasive style never made him many friends.

Gregory had never smoked crack before and was uncharacteristically trepidatious: "I hear if you smoke it once you're hooked for life," he said. "Yeah, so..." Rene replied. Gregory took the pipe. "It looks like your literary Parnassus is quickly turning into a crack party," Rene sneered, never missing a chance to tease me about my abstemious ways. At one point I managed to get him to eat something, a salad made with mâche. He'd always heard of mâche but never had it. A little thing like that could make or break the day. Suddenly he was in a good mood.

We discussed the book cover and Rene produced a color photograph taken at a Penn Station photobooth. In the photo he was wearing a replica Civil War cap (Union side), which he'd purchased in an East Village boutique, and wore for much of that decade. He was also wearing a black motorcycle jacket, and a white shirt with a black crew neck collar which he'd swiped from me a few weeks earlier. It was an expensive item I'd purchased at the Charivari shop on West 57th Street. Rene always had a good eye for quality.

You had to come to Rene through his work, and you had to admire the work enough to endure the abuse.

If you were lucky you were eventually admitted into the V.I.P. room. I always considered Rene lazy, and resented him for it. To watch someone throw away a god-given talent is a difficult thing. But now I think I understand that by refusing to treat poetry as a mere literary exercise, he kept the poems as close to himself as possible. He had no interest in writing anything that was not of the essence. The themes of passion and betrayal that drove his life also drove his poems. In the three decades since we published this book, I have reread it countless times. It has become one of my favorite books of poetry. This book is full of small masterpieces that I continue to puzzle and marvel over. Nearly every one of them is memorable, whereas I can hardly call to mind a single poem from the collected works of many of his contemporaries.

The poems of the *Greek Anthology* were his primary model and ideal, and the verses in *God with Revolver* are likewise satirical, elegiac, homoerotic, epigrammatic, and by turns elegant and crude. The erotic is the door to the divine; God and lover are one, and his is not a Christian god of love. This is the subject of the title poem in this book, "God with Revolver." Years later Rene told me he felt this poem foretold the events of 9/11, as if through the personal he intimated the global.

In the 1990s Rene's life stabilized. I think he realized that if he continued to live like that, he would soon die. He did have an instinct for self-preservation after all. He got a studio apartment in the Chelsea Hotel, through the largesse of its then-owner, Stanley Bard, and his friend Rita Barros, and began a successful career as a visual artist, painting his poems. Almost daily I encountered him in the hotel, buoyant, elegantly dressed, so different from that earlier haunted incarnation.

In 2003 I commissioned him to make me a painting based on one of my favorite poems in this book, "Edit View." The filmic title actually refers to the view from the window of his friend Edit DeAk's Soho loft. He is preparing to go out for a night on the town. The unit of time in the poem is the pack of cigarettes, like sand running through an hourglass. "What is square time?" I asked him. "Square time," he repeated flatly. (He hated questions.) A few days after he delivered the painting, he brought me a smaller canvas with a coda that read: *then time eats its children ... and we forget.* He told me the poem was really about Kronos and Lethe, the personifications of time and forgetfulness in Greek myth. At a time when everyone was young and immortal and living for the next party, Rene had an awareness of how it was all slipping away. He was well acquainted with Oblivion.

All his life Rene had an abiding love of French culture. His favorite poets were Villon and Verlaine, and he translated both authors for his own enjoyment. Like Kerouac, he grew up in a French-speaking community in Massachusetts (New Bedford). One of his childhood friends told me how in the seventh grade Rene would constantly correct his French teacher. He would be thrilled with the thought that his works would find an audience in France. This is his second book published by Éditions Lutanie. I would like to express my gratitude to Rachel Valinsky and Manon Lutanie for their commitment to his work.

Raymond Foye
Woodstock, N.Y., 2022

GOD WITH REVOLVER

VOLUME ONE

AND then I tried to put myself at
a distance from the subject, but the
distance was just another
angle on the same subject and
it was always the same subject, you.

BLUE BAYOU *for Dickie Landry*

He was 18 working in a gas station
to pay off his new car when they
came in and blew out his brains

Now the rain is coming down
so thick it looks planned out
a crack of lightning and finish

You love him, then he is no more.
Your daily life changes
The back yard looks different

A bird sits on the window sill for a second
He went to work and didn't come home
They killed my son.

A good kid.
With all the crooks and politicians
They killed my son

God, if I were You
and had my pick
I'd take the young, the beautiful, and the good

Holy Saturday 1981

I just don't want to die like Gregory
Battcock tied up in a corner of my penthouse
This love of knives by...ah...hispanics
and terrified by guns at an early age
from being aimed at too many times
by the wrong man, my father
Maybe because it's superficial
maybe surface is
the supreme grace of the Bomb Style
But I've had too many knives pointed at
me to think it's a coincidence

"I'LL never
be old

I'll be
young and

then one day
I'll be gone"

COLD BEER

The dark side of the night
The rain, the cold
a fire
a certain distance from oneself
a recessed memory
seeing someone
again
who would eradicate my existence
Will I ever get inside
by the fire
warm my toes

I dream about Morocco and
Starting a new Career. I spend all my
Money on odds and ends. The smallest
Errand takes a week to plan. I sit in
The kitchen and hear the water drip on
The aluminum take-out plate from the
Chinese take-out place. I've been
a year and a half and haven't bought
One dish. The electricity wasn't con-
nected until last month. Something
Really awful is going to happen soon.

THE boy flies, the poet follows
and cry when I get blown
and don't get a hard on
and then sleep dreaming you beckon
Wake up again in arms beautiful as myth
and they're not yours.
I grate my claws into the air
and hold on.

I wake up hallucinating
I lock the windows so I don't jump out
Into this glorious view
I've become so corrupt

EDIT VIEW

It's Festive tonight you said
as I stared out into
the blasted ruin of my life
It's "Festive"
tossing a sequin into the pit
The word falls flat
it's midnight
square time
time of the dogs
nineteen cigarettes
left.

THE TWO BROTHERS

In Picasso's painting
"The Two Brothers" the older
holds the younger on
his shoulders. Now
Louie and his older brother
are trying to kill me
I never had anyone to
protect me
When I was 12
My big brother
made me blow
a carfull of guys.

THIRTY five today
Spent the night with 18 yr. old boy and 34 yr. old woman
His prick was as thick as a dictionary
My best birthday in years
I was alone when I turned 32
When I turned 33
and especially 34
I sucked his ass all night
of course, afterwards I cried myself
to sleep thinking about the irreversible changes in
    my life
and how I won't have more than sporadic happiness
holding him in my arms.
But it was ok. I never take off the little
medal with the angel
It guards my heart that nothing enters or leaves
Wonder if Louie remembered my birthday
Coming back on the bus I woke up. Kid 16
next to me playing with my crotch.

DISASTER always befalls the **holidays**
dad was a maniac at Christmas
throwing out the tree
taking away what I'd saved for **presents to gamble**
mom scrambling for the ornaments
and the Christmas alone in Paris
when I wrote her that long letter
and never saw her again
I miss you so much mom
if only our lives had been different.
I've arranged my life to secure the greatest
unhappiness for myself.
Steven walking out at quarter to twelve New Years Eve
and now Louie on Christmas Day, our anniversary
one year to the day, a nice little bow
wrapping everything up. I sit here
in the little apartment
the photos ripped up, glass smashed everywhere
the things I gave him left behind.
the book. I'm just a kid.
I must have done something, it must somehow
all be my fault.

What am I supposed to do
with the presents I gave you? point to them?
This is the book? These are the poems? This is
the photo?
What do I do now? Walk barefoot in the glass?
I don't want to be Rene right now. This always
happens to him. Don't act like Rene
I don't know what to do next
I loved buying the presents
and now they're mine it was so evil
not to take them I'm like a little kid
my feelings never grew past eight or nine
I can still see the shattered ornaments
But now my mother isn't here to salvage the tree
to take up the bits and pieces. Mamma
When I grow up we'll spend Christmas together
I'll buy you a mink coat I'll make a lot of money
We'll have a big house. Please no matter what I do
always love me. Please tell me I'm a good boy.
Don't let daddy hit me anymore. Sleep with me
mamma
don't leave me, hold me in your arms and let
me sleep

ON LONG POND

God, don't let me cry in the subway
don't let me kill anyone or let them
kill me. I've come so close
Don't let me cry in the subway
In the elevator, I don't know what I'm doing
How I wanted to be wonderful
go somewhere and have smart friends
never hurt anyone so young
My heart was cut out at an early age
and tossed around the playground
If I could get away from them
They were strong all I had was a horrifying
intelligence
that learned to wound cut
and now, in the playground you can do
anything
But tell the truth
I have become the brute
Have been turned into an animal
Solitary hunting vicious
Finding betrayal in friends

I seek enemies' constancy
Love Ha Ha
Three years I loved the same man
He left me
He's trying to get my apartment
To move in with a new lover
I am thirty-four and not right in the head
Everyone is afraid of what I might say. So am I.
No one has to worry: in about three months
I'll be on the street
Without any money
In circumstance to suit my mood
When you're in the street
You're a lunatic raving
And he'll be living here
In this exquisite and cursed apartment
Having my friends over
For dinner or just enjoy the view
And I'll be a lunatic raving
In the street
Devoured by jealousy
When you go mad
You see yourself/Going mad

I see myself going mad
I feel the disconnect notice
Someone tried to kill me with two
knives last week

14TH AND 6TH

On this corner he lied to me
17th and 3rd
This is the corner his friend lied
179th Street Kew Gardens
He lies to his parents here
And mocks me to his brother
31 Union Square West
He lies to Delia
E. 12th Street
More lies and beatings the
Years wash into gray
I've written this before
Chris, Steven, now Louie
All confused in my mind
Not getting anywhere
Laugh at me now why don't you
I look pretty silly fat
With the lies I've swallowed
Blushing now with the lies I believed
Embarassed from his body lying in mine
And then lying afterwards with a cigarette

Lying on the phone when I was owed the
Truth and needed it lies backing up
Overflowing like a bowl full of shit
I don't want to write this
He's lying now with someone else
I've already written this
And I've heard all of his lies.

HE'LL never have a
love as constant as mine.
I'm sure I'll have
no trouble finding another faithless
lover

THERE were two boys who loved
each other and were very possessive
and jealous of each other. They
took great delight in making each
other unhappy spending days
together in transports of sadness
until one left and the blue-eyed
one watched his friend go back to
his parents waiting until
he would return to the little apartment
in the Spanish quarter. This went
on for several years alternating
great love and insane suffering
until they became sick, one with
fever and the other with headache.
When they would separate one would
get well and the other sicker both
unhappy they would see each other
again and be deliriously happy and it
would make the other sick. Each
time you fit a puzzle together
more pieces are missing.

As he sat in his apartment waiting
for his friend he became frightened
by the apartment. When he went
out he would be afraid to come
back and started to be afraid
wherever he was. In their passion
the windows were broken and the
door didn't close. His friend
however thought it was romantic
to come over and make love for a
few hours in a bombed out place.
As they began to see each other
less often, the one who had
to live there found it more
difficult to do the simplest thing
for himself and the place became
foetid. The dark one, who was looked
after and spoiled by his parents
was enchanted that his friend
loved him so much as to care
about nothing else in life could
find no reason to fear for his

friend's safety casting it aside
as overdramatization.
One night an intruder killed him
as he slept. When the other
discovered the body he assumed
that his friend had been killed
by someone he'd brought home
from the street.

LOVE LETTER

"You evil son of a bitch
Can't you see how sick you
make me. Why don't you stay away
from me I hate you"

LAUNDRY

We fucked
so much
everything
I own has
come stains

I'D NEVER been happy with my
sex
As a child I practised cross-
dressing
Then lived as a transvestite for
years
Finally I decided on the
operation
My lover was awfully supportive.
They completely changed my
anatomy
Cut into my chest. I
don't remember much
about the surgery
but I remember my joy
When I looked down
and saw that finally
I was a man.

GOD MIDTOWN

Like Joan Crawford in "Susan and God"
You walk into a cocktail party
and announce your beliefs
"I got religion"
The way I "got" Fiesta Ware
a year before the prices went up
So, I took down the Icart
and put up a crucifix.
Now my apartment opens up
and saints fly in from the top
They like my new decor.
Heaven I hear is still into Deco
As there is a god of the penitent
and mystic so too is there a
God, midtown, for silly people

GINGER ROGERS

In the movies we can be young and clever
With stylish wit. In 'Swingtime', unemployed
and down and out there were still flowers in all the
vases
And poverty an art deco suite. We manufactured
our lives
In this New York. Not knowing when our
Next meal would come we knew it would be in a
Fancy restaurant if we just wore the right clothes
And trusted our wisecracks. And beauty we knew
Was just a matter of the right angle and lighting
We had the gift of improvisation. They would love
our
Cleverness. Didn't Holly Golightly end up alright in
The Movie? We would be that kind of sparkling
Mischievous queen.
Now we know Melville's New York in 'Pierre'
Scrounging beers when the champagne ran out
The New York where brilliant salons are closed to us
Dirty feet and busted heels. We claw where we

Once sat up and begged.
Our make-up following the same outlines
The features shrunken and hard beneath
Loved only when our eyes are shut
Hands sticky afterwards
If only
We'd been cynical at the beginning
We could've turned out ok
If only we'd believed the book
Where Holly Golightly disappears from the
face of the
Earth at the end.

POEM TO THE SOUNDTRACK FROM THE MOTION PICTURE 'GREASE'

If you'd been the kid next door everything'd've
been different
The light would be the same
Fall at the same angle
The same color through the leaves
The same Chevy on blocks in the backyard
But you'd be under it ready for your 16th birthday
A party...and your driver's license.
My name is Albert
Al, at the bowling alley
On Tarklin Hill Road
The manager calls me 'Frolic'
I secretly like the name
I am fourteen
I smoke Kents
You spot pins at the bowling alley
I'm hopelessly devoted to you
I hang out in the pit with you
You smoke Winstons
I start smoking Winstons

You smoke all my cigarettes
I do all your homework
And none of my own
Get the sound here the strikes the spares the tinny
    radio the fan the vacant lot
You're the only one
Who doesn't try something
To get me to
Jerk you off
Or blow you
Even though
We both know
That I am
Burning
To
Since
I saw you
Soaping up
In the shower
After gym class
When I got detention
For not doing my homework

It was big.
And so young.
The world was young and the cars are antiques now
I'll spare you the falling leaves
And the summer getting on
The raft on the sleepy Acushnet river in the
    Sawmill Woods
But I can't keep out the light
Through that big old elm tree by the river
And sitting under it
The week before your birthday
When I gave you that tattoo.
My shirt caught fire on your birthday cake
Sixteen candles.
You put out the flames with your body
And drove me to the emergency room
In your candy apple red Chevy
They thought I had a bad sunburn
But I stayed two weeks
I still have the scar.

You visited me once and brought a pizza
I never rode in that car again

You became my brother's friend
I'd hear the rumble from the glasspacks as you guys'd
peel out looking for trouble
Your family moved away in the middle of the next
school year.
I never heard from you again.

I did that tattoo with a needle
and India ink
I'd never done anything like that before
The wind rippled across the water rustling the leaves
and I passed out
I came to and your face was this far away
My cheek against your bicep
And the asterisks of bubbles on your teeth
As you smiled that I was ok
What else did we do, what happened during that blur
The yellow leaves green shadows tan skin white teeth
pink gums blue jeans white
Curly black hair...summer days drift beyond reach
and poof they are gone.

And it's the light I remember now a summer so distant
And I'm still jumping over that barbed wire

To get back under that old tree.
Maybe you died in Nam.
You must be married
And your kids
When they look at your left hand
Between the thumb and index finger
Do you tell them about the raft
About the river in the Sawmill Woods
About smoking behind the bowling alley
About your car
And the kid next door
Who tattooed
That little
Initial
F

SOMETIMES what the picture is
of is important enough.
In this litho by Robert Hawkins
the face is the perpetual
victim
The Aztec after Cortez
the Stranger in Manhattan
Tibet.
The technique doesn't matter
It's the greasy crayon
The intelligent eyes
and the barbed wire
Sears across the face
of an entire civilization

CHRIST PANTOCRATOR

In a world where there is suffering
There are peonies and Russian skaters.
And to have that love and still be young
The attitude accepting the triumph
Secures the greater future triumph
The orphan the young West German girl
Looks reassuringly at her partner (was he hurt?)
You want them to do so well
As we try to all do something else as well
Self-conviction dignifying excellence
The entrance with fanfare
The aspirations of millions
Skating! that it's done at all
And to win at it
Never bored or pettish at defeat
Youthful ebullience/consummate mastery?
Are we to compare the tragic laugh and the
giggle?
We saw the new fireworks and they were simple
But who doesn't feel a little wicked when they win

The perception of time under stress
We get the award the tears fill the eye
Were we really that good
The prize?
Just be happy you didn't fall.

THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ah, Painting, my love is true
Painters *are so horrible* it's amazing they come up
with you
And though the artists are all shits, I still love you
It's the hustlers who get hustled and theirs is the great
Tragic laugh. Let them drink champagne from cow-
boy boots rich.
Painting, I would never judge you. You are beyond
personal taste
You are beyond criticism and bigger than me, the
painters even.
Painting, you would never walk out and you take only
a second
To see you I've traveled miles and never stopped
I have cried at night
That you might've been a hoax and I a fool
Running around town a complete spectacle
Writing my little reviews
The artists are all ungrateful slobs.
I will serve you in whatever capacity I may

I will ignore the mediocre and snub these works
When offered to me even though I know I could sell
them for lots.
I will live in the glaring light of impossible standards.
I will not tell millionaires what to invest in
Or dull my reason in trade. Nor will I accept the
small payola
Because my opinion bears the weight of the ages.
Time will
Find I gave small praise to small beauty, never willfully
Destroyed a painter's career, or confused what I
thought about
A painter with what I knew about his work. Painters
have
Socialite envy and get caught up in the world. We
don't.
They can become rich and stay good rich and go bad
or never move
Up one notch socially or economically and still make
the paintings
That hum on the walls of the museum of the future
like Robin Bruch.

But the painting is always there to let us know where
we are
Like my little Brice Marden I've watched it grow
From twelve hundred to four thousand like a teenage
son
I call it my De Kooning.
Someday if it has to it will save me from the poorhouse.
And my beautiful Robin Bruch from 73 that has kept
me out of the
Madhouse. And my Stephen Mueller fit for a space-
ship.
And my portrait by Alex Katz that proves I'm a poet.
And my Schneeman, a small wall.
And the Beuys that Louie bought me and the Hunt
Slonem I bought
Because it defied every canon of taste and saves me
from
The sin of pride.
I offer up myself a sacrifice to you
Stung by the double demon of Venality and Fame
Your temples cracked under the curatorial sledge-
hammer

Your surfaces obliterated by overambitious restorers
Your meanings dinged beneath the smudge of the
    theses of
The art hystericals, I burn my little flame
That will, I hope, still illuminate the beautiful
Wherever it may turn up.

1969

VOLUME TWO

SUDDENLY all suspicion
and doubt vanishes
Who cares where he is or who
he's with. Let the winding
paths of youth take him
to those loud low places
the caves and their cavemen.
let those solemn energetic
amusements distract his
easily distracted mind.
A minute of him is a summer
in the resorts where he
offers me his youth in
all its glory one night a
week
after fighting the guerilla **warfare**
of fun.

YOU meet and you step into another life
That happening isn't like anything
But you know it was already there, waiting
And you know everything could blow away
The way a season has its negative, like a photo.

LOVE

How I lay
in its embrace
and woke
to stare at
its toothless
face.

APT. 20

On my ceiling there was a fish
bubbles out its mouth. A pigeon
and a serpent with fangs attacks
a goldfish there too. We'd lie
in bed and look at them.
The church bells would ring
at noon and six a.m. 24 strokes:
How many times we counted them.
We called our bed the cloud.
And there we'd float.
The bathtub was in the kitchen
and took forever to fill up.
We'd bathe together afterwards.
Oh the countless cigarettes and
take-out chinese food.
The bed was so narrow
Three years we made it fit.
The sheets were green the
sheets were pink the sheets
white linen from the past.

Little home, farewell.
The broken windows
and the bodega on the corner.
Now from my balcony
I look out over all New York.

April 8, 1981

WE were together
three years
It seems a moment
but in that
instant
he told me
I was
old
my body was
no good
and my
cock was
disgusting
I am
still
laying down
my life
for his

CORAZON

La rosa de amor
Ha perforado mi corazón
¿Donde está Luis
amorcito, arbolito
mi conchita, soldado?
Vuelas al sur,
Pero tu corazón
esta' en Nueva York
esta' en Nueva York
Pero mi corazón vuela
hacia el sur
La vida nos ha abandonado
Estoy contigo hasta la muerte
O Santo Domingo

MADRUGADA

false dawn
Louie asleep. *Slip out of bed*
That Spanish time of night
Turn on lamp. Open Architectural Digest
I bought it so I wouldn't have to look at my
apartment
The $600 thousand dollar Degas on page 56 an
Obvious fake you can tell by the face
I'm good at that sort of thing
I've always wanted something really great
A Vermeer in a junk store.
Diana Vreeland sits around her godawful
apartment
Descanting on how only the Rothschild Chateau
Mouton
Was good enough for her to feel really comfortable
in

The windows in front of me are both
Smashed from burglaries three months ago
Got to have them fixed

It'd be nice to have a few good things
For Louie to throw when he got mad
Not pictures he'd never do that
We both know that pictures aren't
Material objects in my neighborhood
I mean something that would really
Make it worth a crook's while
Like a ruby cabochon
Something absolutely beautiful
Like that Spanish saint that only cost
$700 and when I finally
Saved it it was gone. I would never have
wanted anything else
A painting acquires material status when
it's resold
All my pictures will attack me for sure if I
Don't make that clear except my Russian Jesus
Who's really on my side.
The cascade of a lordly manor
The seasons in a baronial park
Gold lighters flicking jewels clink as
taffeta rustles amidst

Objects de vertu and cattleyas
At this moment I'm looking for a long butt
in a plastic
Ashtray.
Didn't find one.
If only I had some great thoughts to console me
The knowledge that I was the sole repositorium of
Some unique and precious insight
No visions only vues
Well, they just turned on the heat.
I wonder if Diana Vreeland has heat yet?
Now Auraro gilds the Cote d'Azur as we draw the
fabric by
Clarence House about us.
Here's Jean Cocteau's house
Still inhabited by his 'adopted son'
Ah the quaint legal curiosities of the country
that gave the world
champagne. Nothing ostentatious just Picassos.
I don't live in that world I guess
I subscribe to another magazine in my heart
The intricacies of reciprocal amusements
from one great house

to the next are beyond the unravellings of
one who dwells as I.
Even the shibboleths of the Grande Pédérastie
Are mute in my mouth. The Fine and Elegant
Con game of the fine and fancy let it be
played
Around me with credit to the photographer
and couturier
I'd love a ruby ring but who wouldn't as I
hear the
Faint sound of Louie's gold chain rustle
through the hair
On his chest as he turns over in bed and
says
What are you doing writing you're crazy
come to bed.
Diana Vreeland, the comforts of Chateau
Mouton are none to that

Oct. 20, 1980 7 A.M.

MI esposo Luis me besa como
la mariposa colorida besa la
flor blanca

CUANTO mi esposo Luis es guapo
mi corazón llora por su
misericordia como mi chocha
llora por su pinga

¿I'll drag my ass around the world to forget?
¿Find a sleepy island where the men all look like him?
¿This is how we forget, by reminding ourselves?
¿Walk the dirt road every day to the beach?
¿Visit the medical school in San Pedro?
¿Forget his memories for myself?
¿Retrace his steps in Old San Juan?
¿Find the house in Santiago de Cuba?
¿Go to bars he mentioned once? ¿Forget?
¿Serenaded by fishermen at El Flamboyon?
¿Say no to them then? ¿Y Volvere?
¿Forget? ¿Coral sand, boy throws his shadow
across the sun?
¿Alone at night hear loud stars in the tropics?
¿When the black parrot creases the air forget?
¿The falcon and lagoon, lizard, goat and chicken?
¿Forget them? ¿Pastelitos at Kongoty?
¿As black men to my bed, black clouds to the
Sunset, road crabs in the headlights cracking
Under the tires, the nocturnal predations

¿Rare fruit that removes skin? ¿Still
Jumping on that taxi at Union Square
Without his shirt says I'm an
¿Old faggot, forget? ¿Papa Malo? ¿Jail?
¿Mamey? ¿Tropical fruit removes skin?
¿*On Flamenco Beach remember*
Union Square, forget?
¿Symmetrical mountains tropical moonrise
"Old Faggot" I remember? ¿The Meringue
Switchblades, orchids at Punto Aloe
Destroyed apartment deep-fat soaking bed
Gold chain, fever, you remember my
Bed in San Pedro, Forget? ¿Hermano Negro
Forget me remember him, forget? ¿Living
Crabs crack under tires tropical night
Head lights? ¿White laundry? ¿Peeling suntan?
Best house on the island. Mixed blood. Pernil
¿Loud stars? ¿Pato? ¿Chagito? ¿Boy throws
shadow across sun

Punto Aloe, Culebra. November 23, 1981

NO me Desprecies, No Encuentro Palabreo
Ni Llanto ni Velorio, Quisiera
El Brindis, A la Reina. El Ron la mi Mechuri
Consejo de Amigo, Sequiré Mi Camino
El Negro, Mentira, Guitaro Lloren Guitaro
Te Parto el Alma, Amor Trágico, Mujer Boricua
El Angel de la Guarda, Te Quiero Dijiste
Naila, Borinquén, Tus Amores Clandestinos
Historia de mi Vida, El Ultimo Beso, Tu eres Libre
Engañada, Alegórica. Los limons Limosna
Te Vas de Mí, Hoy cometí un error bello de
Incertidumbre. Nuestro amor es el mas Mundo
Hechicera, De Patitas Una Lágrima en la Garganta
Ese soy yo, Ha pasado el Tiempo
La tierra del Coqui, Querube, El Muerto
Nervios de acero.
Luz del Alma. El Barbaro soy
Ha Salido Que te amaba. Hoy me Recuerda
Si diós Fuera Negro. La Patrulla
Pónle un Se Vende. Tu Serás Mía. Oigo de Amor
Hey, Un Sentimental. Me Olvidé de Vivir
Pobre Guajiro, Atrevida Les Niego.

Amor en Serio—El Herido Te arrepentirás
Doce Campanadas—Esposita, Cosas Como tú
Extasío de Amor—Volví la Espalda
Temeridad—Urgente, Quien tiene tu Amor
Amor Perdido—Temporal—Pato Robas
El Fucu—El Cabo Miguel—Salud Cariño
La Ultima Copa. Borracho por amor
Júrame Bye Bye Llorame

(Jukebox in P.R.)

POEM IN SPANISH

See him? I once loved a man like that
Eyes like a razor that see everything
Without moving even when I am alone
He was never there and he was jealous
My casa is cold when he is not here
My house is a garden without sun
And he would call me una puta. Mi amor dolorosa
Men think all beautiful women are whores
Now he is not here and my house
Is a garden without sun
The petals of the years fall from the flower

LOST CHRISTMAS poem 81

YELLOW '73 Ford Galaxie
Black top
Scrape down driver' side
New York Plates
Corner 4th St./2nd Ave.
Nov. 1, 1981 2:30 A.M.

JAN. 1, 1982/HOW LONG HAVE THEY BEEN TOGETHER?

Information without emotion
I don't own anything now
Gave back the gold chain
No links with the past
No place to live
A strange calm
The murderer's mother loved him
And I may in fact be evil
Little apartment so long ago
Involuntary spasms of recall
Aug. 8, 1980
Lake
Boat
the oar laps calm
the...that sound
Smell of lake
Color of water
Happiness anticipated
The childhood island

When we got here it was covered in beer cans.
"Try to imagine how beautiful it was"
How beautiful I was when I was a kid.
big blue eyes. A prodigy
expansive and kind: I was raped at ten.
I was beat up by my brother's friends
Other kids were protected by their brother
Mine made me blow a carfull of guys when I
was twelve.
They all had knives.
A radiant child is an easy mark
So I learned to become vicious
If they were going to kill me they'd be forced
to remember my dying words
I never found loyalty
Most injuries occur in the home
and the great perfidies from those we trust most
I am the island of childhood
civilized into rubble
the waste of emotion
Poisoned under the
toxic by-products of love.

I am corrupt
and I am this country
The vision of democracy gone blind
The expansion of enterprise
when it reaches the limit
and turns in on itself
forced to steal once everything is owned
I've see the backside of Whitman's promise
The immigrant—Italian of song, Irish of
good intent, Germans, Greeks, Haitians, Hispanics,
of flashing blade become gangsters, micks, spics
Wops, Guineas, butt-fuckers and niggers in this
Great land.
There are animals in human form
in packs like wolves
The noble eagle rips the common sparrow
People like insects, vermin, and masses of bacteria.
As the island was hospitable, they left it in ruins
I am this country, America,
I see you tied spread-eagle to the map
heaving and crawling with ants.

(unfinished)

WE want their beauty tragic
See death in their eyes
The insect behind the beauty

THE DOG

Then love takes us to faraway **places**
Certain theaters, public toilets, jail, and
That long highway I would hitchhike alone.
The snow melted; it rained and turned to ice.
I stand in front of Mister Donut. It's
4:00 A.M. Nothing comes into my mind
I call a cab. Standard cab. It arrives.
As I walked in the snow the other day
I had a dim vision: two men, two chairs,
And a dog. I'll never know that address
and never sit in front of that T.V.
Hopes and dreams give way to failure and dread.
In bed tonight I sucked the pillow and
Can smell a stranger's asshole on my thumb.
Some guy I blew in a car on the street.
They say it's only snow while it's snowing
Then it's slush until it freezes over.
I walk up the stairs. I think, 'Don't hurt me.'
I sit down to eat. I think, 'Don't hurt me.'
The two people next door have a baby.

I don't want to die or live. Don't kill me.
Now I find pleasure in horrible dreams,
Sleep brings the evil I escaped awake.
And waking never realize the dream
To wake up next to someone beautiful
When the light drives its awl between your eyes

GOD WITH REVOLVER

The inside of the body pushes towards the outside
And I push myself through streets full of men
Cafes full of men. I order a coffee from a man
Men push through the street in front of the cafes
Bargain in black eyes
My life overflowing its bounds
I can't buy food, negotiate the streets
or bargain in this life
There are men everywhere the
magnificent saber of Islam in their eyes
Men terrify me
Beauty terrifies me
Beautiful men terrify me
and I would faint in the Barbès mud
the inside of my body pushing towards the outside
I sit in a cafe in Barbès
and a woman walks by in tears
The God of Islam is the God of Love
and I know that love is a terrible thing
and a god of love will finish my life

Love is the steepest bargain
of terrible price. The heart
pushes towards the outside the
heart is a souk
one civilization dents another
pushing towards the outside
and I would pass out in the
market-place men everywhere
My life not such important merchandise
The inside pushes me further out
I would die here without murder or suicide
Barbès or Essaouira full of men
The God of Islam, eighteen
years old, 100 francs a
God with a revolver

Barbès Dec. 4, 1981

I WAS SUPPOSED TO DINE AT THE FRENCH EMBASSY

I was supposed to dine
at the French
embassy
But stayed in bed with
someone who wasn't worth it
His lover came home
and threw me
out
I slept in a transient
hotel
with a toothless black
man
When I got up he'd
stolen my ring
and my coat, too.

I saw a boy walk down 5th Ave.
He seemed pleased with
his purchases

I think they were presents.
And the man who packed the
T.V.
at Crazy Eddie, wearing
a black beret, down vest,
thermal shirt and jeans
tucked in his rubber
boots
knew where he was going
after work.
I envy these two.

PRISON

God spoke to my mother in
the factory
She bent over her sewing machine
and the voice of her mother
said
"Everything will be alright"

Two days later July 3rd my
brother was convicted on a
felony
and sent up the river.
I sit in the J&J in New
Bedford
It is 3 AM
Prison
The teenager just
Put his friend in a cab
The landscape is blasted
Highways cut the heart of town

The book writes itself
These things are here
I sit in the J&J.
Eggs are frying it's a slow
night
One is forced inside
The flame is out and awaits
the Divine spark.
one orders more coffee
"more coffee"
Prison
more coffee
The fan, distant metallic sounds
The radio now, I mean the
Juke box
Young working class men
Which is the right side
of the law

The poor live in concentration
camp cities
Underwater cities industry abandoned

impelled by forces they
cannot control
Prison

Keep the change, Frank.
It'll blow a fuse if I turn
it on
You broke the bill
But ended up short
Now the heavies come in
It's that time. The pinball
You know, a new cup
You put your cigarette
out in the last one.
By mistake

There are people who believe
they are innocent when they
are guilty
Prison

they pass the lie detector
test
The Standard Times
You get home and somebody
has to go to the
hospital
The car gets totalled the
same day
and they get you for driving
without a license
again

Something keeps you from
leaving
You get a taste flirting with
the law
with danger
Prison
The Politicians murdered this city
It's young men go to jail
The poor are sent there by public
defenders

are addicted there
at fourteen like the sex
and will do anything to get
back
and serve a long stretch at
Concord
where they fuck your brains
out
And my poor innocent
brother who got there
because he was stupid
Prison

and trusted justice
Behavior is misintended
If you're not in the gang you
are the enemy

Nobody stands a chance
and the cycle jumps

Threading a monopoly thru
Acushnet
In the Sawmill Woods
"If anybody complains I
say 'get out'"
You can't work at Jack in the Box
with those tattoos

And you do anything to get
a site on a fishing boat
But they never want you
So you never get out you go
inside to
Prison
He wants them to take him

Be with tough guys
and the cops are the
toughest
so they get him

"The Wall" Pink Floyd
I try to maintain my
ambiguity
I don't belong here
The book writes itself in my
mind

God spoke to
my mother in the
Prison
Factory. She bent over
her machine to hear it
again
In the profound silence
of the heart
God lied to her.

JOAN CRAWFORD VISITS HER FOLKS

"My dreams are becoming more real
and reality more dreamlike,"
admitted the confused star, a personal
friend of mine, who phoned me
from her parents' modest home
The instant before she was slain.
"I dreamed I saw a black man with
white spots, or was it a white man with
black spots?" she confessed.
She also frankly admitted that she didn't
know what was happening to her, and was
perhaps losing her mind, a fear not unknown
to any of her fans.
"The air around me seems weighted.
I hate it here, but in truth I had no
where else to hide from the man who has
just set into effect the action that will
kill me as I talk to you. The air seems weighted
around me and there is a tank from the Second
World War in the town square. Nothing is ever

clean. I tried to put it all behind me, this
shack. All they do is fight, tell me how great
I am. Richard, if I'm so great what am
I doing here? Why isn't my home called
a 'mansion' by the press, safe. Sordid
trappings of luxury, I only wear costume
jewels now; even the real ones are fake.
Somehow the plating wore thin on my
life and, not being introspective, kept
surfacing. I died insane. Maybe
they'll call it murder but I know I committed
suicide. Everything I ever did committed
suicide. There's a fine line between truth
and illusion. Ask Lana (Turner). I called
Lana the instant he pulled the trigger.
She told me she wasn't a racist, that
they'd made it all up in the front office.
When I told her that I'd seen the fine line
that separates us from the vision
of others she observed that there was no
distinction, then contradicted herself
by asking if I was 'for real'

when I explained that I'd
be dead in a split second. I hung up on her.
I didn't know what to answer. Am I
'for real'? Am I, Richard?
No easy answer to that one.
"The sound you are hearing is the report of
the gun aimed directly at my navel,
never seen during the heyday of the old
Hayes office," Miss Crawford continued.
"All my old movies are flashing before my
eyes! My life has not been my greatest
role. There is no 'real' Joan Crawford. I
don't believe in real life, but I'm finding
out about real death," the actress joked.
"I was lying in bed here, little
more than a cot really, wearing the same dress
I'd arrived in. My mother, unaware of
my destiny, was preparing food from my
unhappy childhood. If you looked out
the window over my bed, you could see
oil derricks and dust. I heard the
limousine pull up and knew the pursuit

was over: he'd found me. I'd loved him.
He'd used me. I'd left him. Now he'd found me
and I knew I was lost. I don't pack a rod,
Richard, you know that. Unable to evaporate,
I got out of bed and from the only other
piece of furniture in that tiny room, an
iron chair, I picked up my mink coat and
walked out on the porch.
The driver was letting
him out of the car. There is also another
man here. He loved me once. How
long ago everything seems. The bullet is
connecting now. I guess I'd better
hang up. Bye, Richard."
Bye, Joan.
It's ironic that Joan
Crawford would die not in her Brentwood
mansion, but in front of this miserable
place that she hated: a heap of illusion
swathed in mink, lying in the dirt.

Summer, 1982

SO, let his father come and shoot me.
I can't be shocked by the perversity
of events, or the bestial in people.
The man is an animal, there's no denying
He'd kill his own son for loving me
and probably get off "Enraged father
slays son and son's lover in love nest
Crime of Passion." I personally don't care
If I live or die and to die for love
What could look better in a biography.
A faggot Romeo and Juliet.
The man is an animal, unreasonable and base
Out to destroy his son and if I get in the way
Destroy me too. I should extricate myself from this filth.
But I'm too deep now and it would be poetic justice
The exalted and superior eradicated by the
unenlightened and coarse.

Oct. 22, 1978

SEASONS begin and end abruptly
All winter it's been awful
Now the first day of spring
And you can see it already
A type of happiness. I want
this to be about that happiness
not how abruptly it ends
About spring not about last
winter how abruptly it
began and still follows me around
Sadness only begins abruptly.

March 21st 77 Eleven A.M.

AND so if I should kill myself tonight
and snuff out a lifetime of learning
and a vast repositorium of lore
without a biographical text
to explain these scattered notes
would you publish my letters and reveal
the angle that you had on me?
So, if I kill myself tonight
stop the headache
and the genius all at once
then you could show my letters to the world
show I loved you once.
And your new lover
when he's forgot your name
can say I knew Rene Ricard
And asked him once to leave my house.

GOD'S CRUELTIES

ANDY DIED TODAY AND TOOK
ALL THE FAME WITH HER
February 22, 1987 Rene Ricard

Rene Ricard was a great actress. Like Nicole Kidman, Rene's eyes would go bloodshot before ever shedding a tear, calling upon his capillaries for emotional emphasis. Though Rene rarely "performed," when she did, his greatest "performances" concealed a history of scars left by the switchblades of verbal abuse, welts from the lacerations of emotional undermining, and dark subcutaneous bruises from a childhood of sexual abuse, which Rene, like many, would vent as anger or, in his case, a biting meanness. His pain was easily accessed, it was just below the surface, obfuscated by his whip-sharp wit, flamboyant charisma, and his above-the-fray demeanor. Rene's pain could be utilized effectively; what he revealed was not based on cheap sentiment or superficial emoting, nor was it an "acting technique." Yet these performances—probably the wrong word, but not entirely—were small, reserved for his closest friends and those he considered confidants. When called upon to witness the physical manifestation of Rene's interior pain, tears were expected,

but often seemed to miss their cue. They would appear late; the moment had passed. We'd watch him park it in bloodshot, a fixed emotion.

Over the years, I was privy to Rene shedding many tears. Once, on his deathbed, at Bellevue Hospital. The first time was the night we met, sitting on the floor next to a speaker on the edge of the dance floor; he recounted how he had been abandoned by the great love of his life on Christmas Day. His cornflower blue eyes, distant and steely, revealed that he had been wrecked by this seismic, life-altering rift. Explaining why he was misunderstood was when those red cracks began to appear. "He's told everyone I'm a monster, but I'm not the monster, in fact I'm still a little boy, I mean, I'm the same as I was as a young boy: I'm just a poet." Cue the tears...!

In the brief years that followed, Rene and I shared two things most significantly. First, a love of art—still discovering insights I learned from Rene, I cannot begin to explain how much he taught me about art, art history, painting, and beyond. I watched him see, and saw how he saw differently than anyone I'd ever known, his skewed, visionary outlook the backbone of his "invented scholarship." Rene told me that I helped him discover new artists, and would introduce me by saying, "his gallery is at

the epicenter of NYC's avant-garde." We were invigorated by one another and inspired by the work of a generation of mostly younger New York artists, several of whose work I remain honored to have brought to Rene's attention.

The second thing we had in common was our miserable, psychological, post-love damage, (labile, we'd laugh to the point of tears), the emotional debris left in the aftermath of love's revenge, polluting our brains in the wake of love, which remained, to the end, our most primal bond, it cemented our friendship.

Some years later, Rene shared an extended display of the delayed bloodshot tear-drama, in an exhaustive emotional rollercoaster on the night train from Naples to Rome.

Rene and I left Cookie Mueller, her future husband, the artist Vittorio Scarpatti, and a small group of New Yorkers in Positano in mid-August of '85 to visit Rome. Our plan was to see Francesco and Alba Clemente; Rene wanted to introduce me to Luigi Ontani; we wanted to spend time in the Vatican; then see as many Caravaggio altarpieces and investigate his life in Rome, if possible. Arriving just before dusk in Naples, a taxi outside the train station drove us to Hotel Vesuvius, where Rene talked the desk into letting us stay the night. Naturally, we went

out and stayed out as late as possible; the hotel wake-up call left us barely enough time to check out. Leaving our bags with the concierge, like vampires we tooled around in the too too bright, overheated August daylight, making our way as fast as we could, scurrying like street rats from shade to shadows, eventually making our way to the cool interior of the Museo di Capodimonte. A taxi ride and a faster run through the Archeological Museum. Picking up our bags about the time we arrived the previous day, we realized we best head to Rome while we could, where I still had reservations at the Locarno.

Our taxi dropped us off as far away as possible from the train station in Naples while still being able to say that we were dropped off at the train station. "Relax, Patine, it's Italy, nothing runs on time." We ran to catch the train, both sweating profusely. We climbed aboard the on-time train, just in time. "Patine" was Rene's nickname for me. He was the only one who ever used it.

The train to Rome was packed with locals, many with children, some widows traveling alone, and two passengers, one at each end of the train car, who appeared to be traveling with their chickens (thankfully, both exited rather early at different stations). Within half an hour of departure, the interior lights flickered and slowly woke up

from their midday nap, intensifying, settling somewhere between an amber and the most unsettling red-orange. Rene was prone to singing made-up songs about his surroundings; he gleefully took up the tune of a Shirley Temple song, keeping myself and a few people nearby buoyantly entertained.

In this synthetic light, straining to be heard, Rene, out of nowhere, began telling me about a book of poetry he had been working on. It had been on his mind to discuss it with me since I arrived in Positano. He wanted to tell me about it because he believed I could publish it through my gallery. Who wouldn't be intrigued by the prospect? My father had died a little over seven months earlier, and Rene knew he had been a publisher of sorts.

Rene began describing his idea to me with as much genuine enthusiasm as Judy Garland, his ebullience as infectious as Judy's amphetamine laugh. It seemed simple enough: he wanted his book of poems printed exactly like a comic book, with the same newsprint paper stock, size, and semi-gloss finish for the cover stock. No words on the cover, "Not even my name, just an image." Simple and, at that time, pretty radical. He began to pitch it as if I was a producer at MGM and he was Busby Berkeley with a movie idea. Thumbs together, forefingers pointed skyward,

"COVER IMAGE: WARHOL'S SNUB NOSE REVOLVER. Beautiful. Simple. Iconic. Silver on Black. Right? SILVER/BLACK. TITLE PAGE; imagine the titles from a film noir. The 3D block letters with long shadows. My name, RENE RICARD, above the title, but small, eh? Now, are you ready for the title? Ready? *GOD WITH REVOLVER.*" He repeated, louder, "*GOD WITH REVOLVER*! YOU'RE THE VERY FIRST PERSON I'VE TOLD! DO YOU LOVE THE TITLE? YOU DO, RIGHT?" "YES! I LOVE IT, IT'S GENIUS! I REALLY love the title Rene!" Busby's still pitching to Louis B. Mayer. "Ok, turn the page, BOOK ONE. Like a Raymond Chandler novel. After reading book one, you flip the book upside down, spine still on the left, eh? Ok, and on the back cover, upside down... BOOM! WARHOL'S SNUB NOSE REVOLVER, AGAIN! BUT THIS TIME THE SILVER/BLACK ARE INVERTED! BLACK GUN ON SILVER!" His voice was breaking into screechy squeals, competing with the children. "Open the cover, and again, RENE RICARD over the title, *GOD WITH REVOLVER*, page turned, Book Two... you like it, don't you?" Near giddiness,"We could use the same silver ink used on your business card!" I was in disbelief that he would even consider my involvement. "They're love poems. They're the Louie poems. These are love's poisonous quills. Don't you think it's a good idea? Because I really don't know who else would publish love poems written by Rene Ricard." I tried to respond but he was too

quick, he didn't take a breath. He thought he noticed me not clinging to his every word.

Now meet the other side of Rene Ricard, a wounded victim spewing venom. Suddenly he lashed out at me because of a misperceived slight. "If EVEN YOU won't publish it, why would ANYONE EVER want to publish a book of Rene Ricard's love poems?" He saw red, if he blinked, his face would be a cascade of tears, like a Pat Steir painting. But when he raised his head, he was lurid, deadpan. "I can't believe you don't like it." "I'll never get another book of poetry published. No one will ever publish *GOD WITH REVOLVER*." End scene . . . and tear.

In my opinion, *GOD WITH REVOLVER* is Rene Ricard's most honest volume of poetic works. If I had realized then what a masterful book was torturing his psyche, I might have skipped Rome, rushed back to NYC, and immediately began pulling together the necessary whatever was needed to publish *GOD*, with the Warhol snub nose REVOLVER cover. It was not to be. GOD was not mine to publish. Andy's REVOLVER wasn't *God*'s cover. Recently rereading *GOD WITH REVOLVER*, I now see Rene's maturity; it's Rene hitting his stride as a young poet. Ok, I would not have missed Rome with Rene for all of Venice.

The writing overlaps a year of the "Dia Tiffany" book's poems. Rene was in his early thirties when he wrote most of these. Is there anything more heart-wrenching, more emotionally terminal than the enraged, cinematic madness many experience after the trauma of being ditched by their greatest love? Rene, downed by love, but not out for the count. Snow White is dressed, and Disney's blue knock-out-birds circle his head as his "Crown of Proof." These poems of pain, the experiences from which they are derived, made Rene who he was, and the writer he would become.

Rene delighted in peeking under his Jedd Garet sculpture. He'd lift the hem of the weightless pink lamé cloud. At the pinnacle of this confection sat a blue and white bowling ball, which looked heavy and suspiciously like our planet Earth. Rumor has it that it was lost in Rene's apartment fire around 1990, when he still lived across the hall from Allen Ginsberg on E. 12th Street. He favored the quiet brute, the tortured armature, resembling a mangled Atlas without human form, and without a fuss, carried the weight of the world. "See Patine, Love is an action. He makes it look sissy easy for Mr. Miss Pink Lamé." It's the steel under the chiffon—like in "Grey Chiffon Day," a term Rene coined as a boy in New England, when the bright cerulean light is merely obscured by the mist.

At Rene's memorial I said Rene got better with age. Well, he'd be pleased to know that his writing has too. My connection to these poems is not just a teary train ride from Naples to Rome. Years later, when Rene gave me a second copy of *God with Revolver* to replace a stolen copy, he wrote two dedications:

> Rene Ricard
> Really I cant afford to let you have this Patrick.
> 2004
> July 16
> almost my
> birthday.

Translation: I can't believe you can't afford this, but you can't afford not to have this. Then, on the back of a card from Paige Powell, with her instructions "$20 so load that thang and call me" (referring to a phone he was using at the time), he wrote:

> Dear—I mean
> poor dear Patrick you don't have this
> poor book and
> you deserve it
> more than anyone
> else—and you don't
> remember—but it's
> memorable anyway
> Rene

Rene was both the kindest and cruelest of friends; like Nan Goldin said, "We all suffered his barbs at some point. His tongue was an unlicensed weapon. Even those of us he loved could be scared of him. But I always loved him."

Rene knew he had to be brutally clear about the most sinister and darkest aspects of love, and yet, he rejoiced in the promise he felt in the slightest of flirtatious palpitations, fluttering at the slightest provocation of love, knowing that the shadowed inevitabilities love always provides were part of the deal. Love's cruel gift with purpose.

I miss him daily.

Fortunately, Raymond Foye was ready, patiently waiting in the wings for Rene to step up and out from the chorus line. Along with Francesco Clemente, they were Hanuman Books, the time was right for them to publish *GOD WITH REVOLVER*, which went to press about a year and a half after Andy Warhol died. On the cover, Rene in his well-worn Civil War cap purchased in the East Village—it's in many photos and it's how Michael Wincott portrayed him in Julian Schnabel's "Basquiat;" I have lots of photos of Rene wearing that cap, including Polaroids taken in Positano that summer.

"Look, Patine." I still see a feeble wrist elegantly resolved with Rene's fingers, the only part of the hand I recognized. Weak yet steadily holding up a sketchbook for me to see the drawing he'd done of the night nurse when I returned from getting supplies. In his darkened hospital room I could clearly see the familiar hand of his line, and how he'd "sketched in" with the unmistakable crosshatching his mother, Pauline, taught him as a young boy. I handed him a PayDay candy bar and said good night.

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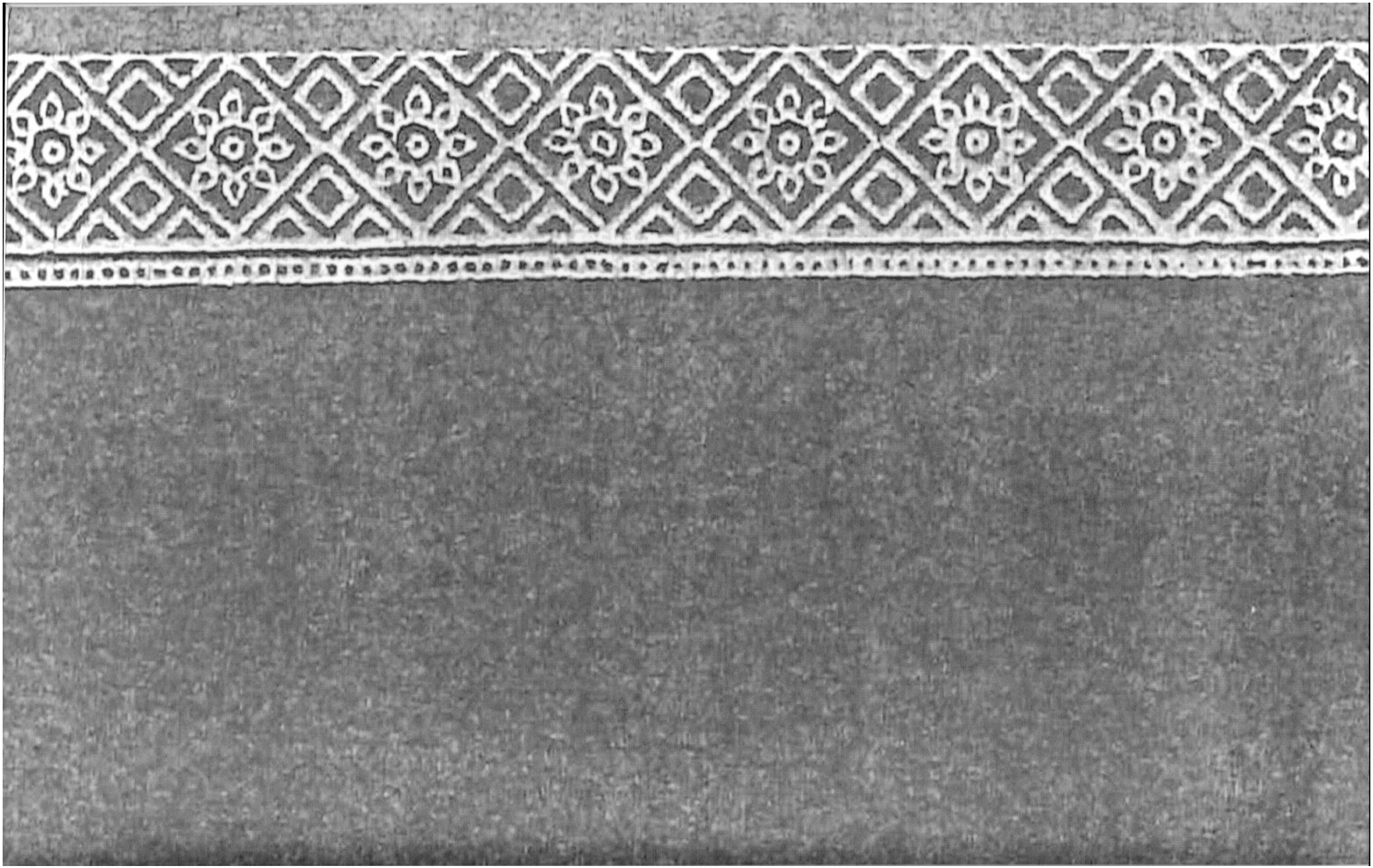
JANUARY 31, 2014, 8:45 p.m.

Rene Ricard died about three hours later.

Pronounced dead at 12:05 a.m. February 1st, 2014

Patrick Fox

NY, 2022